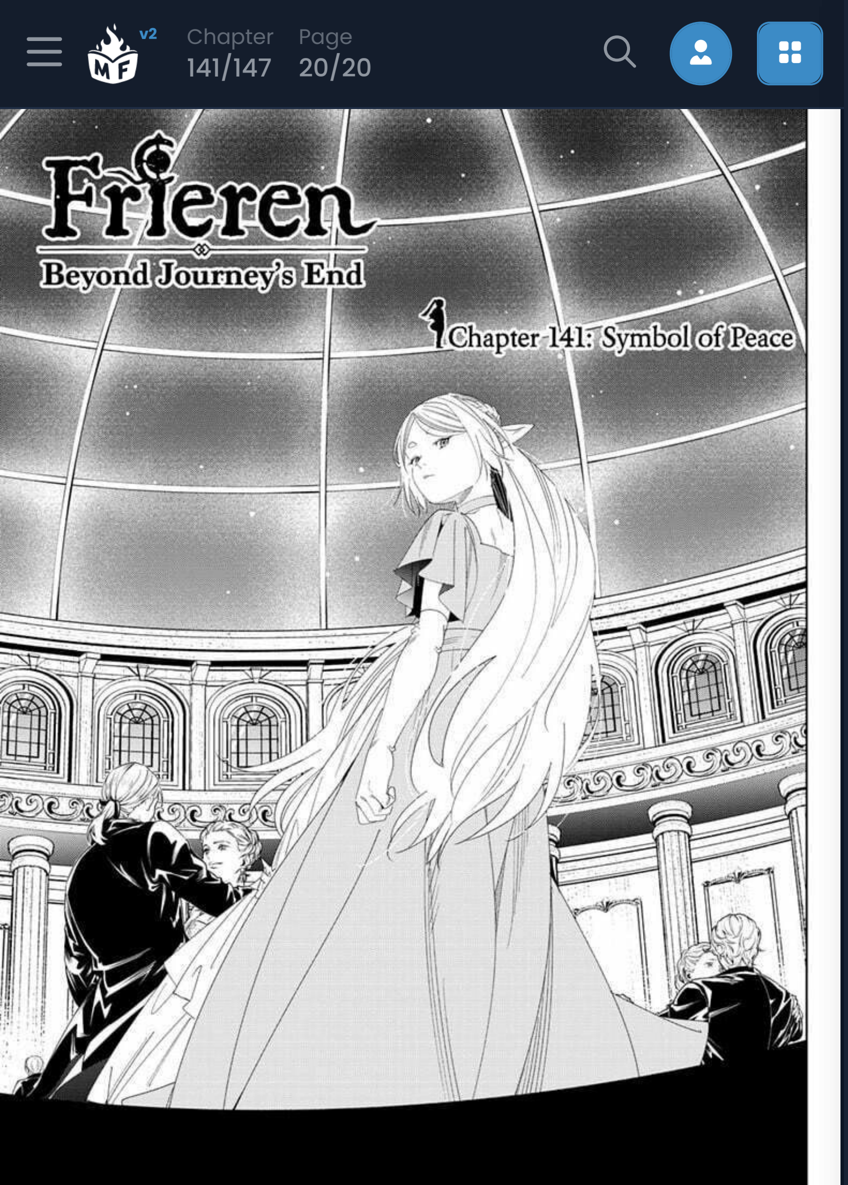
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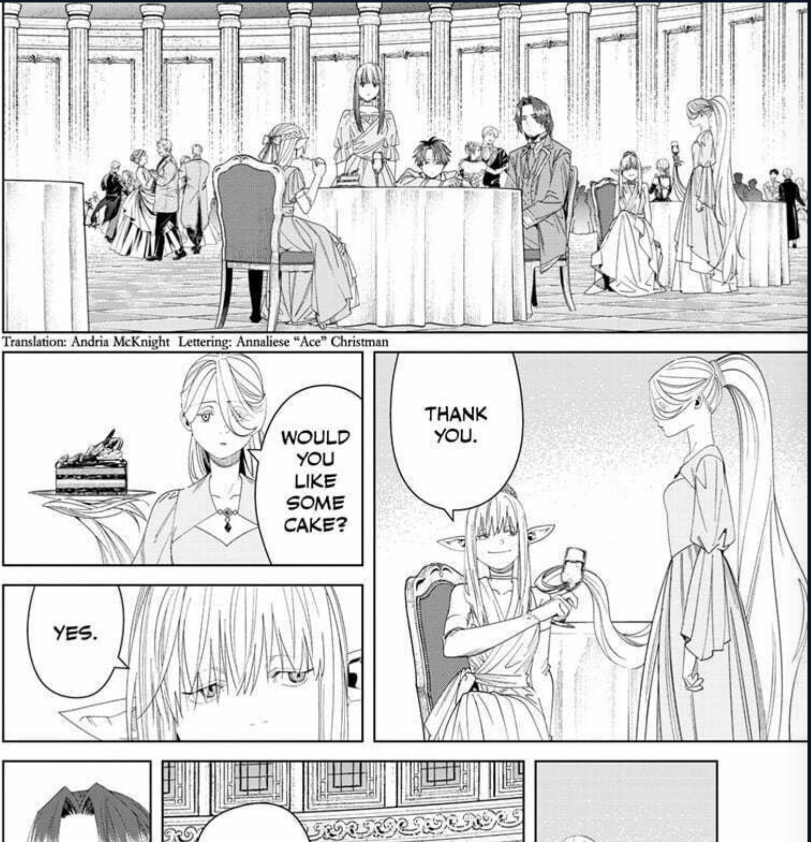
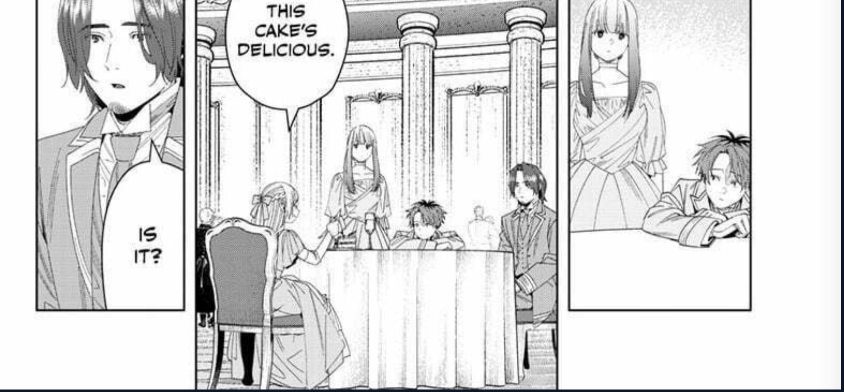
Beyond Journey's End
Chapter 141: Symbol of Peace

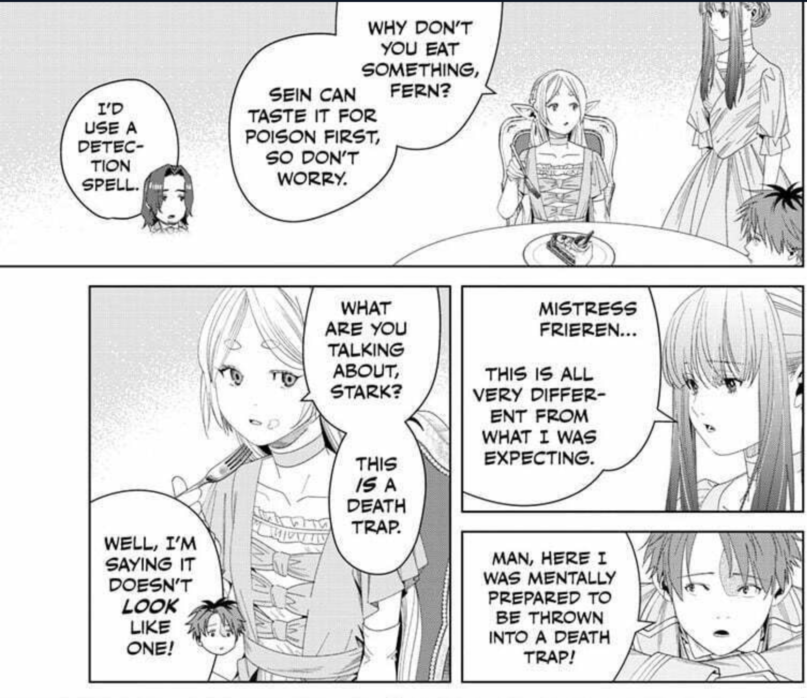
Story by Kanehito Yamada
Art by Tsukasa Abe

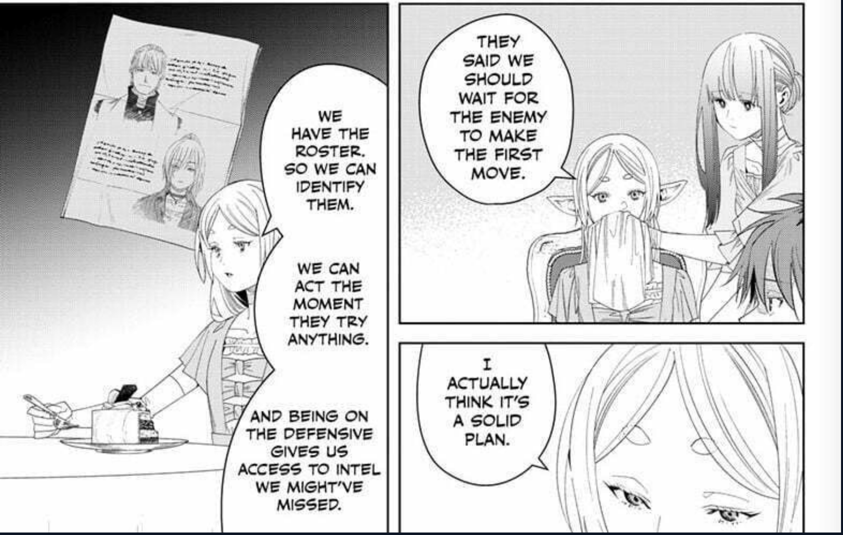


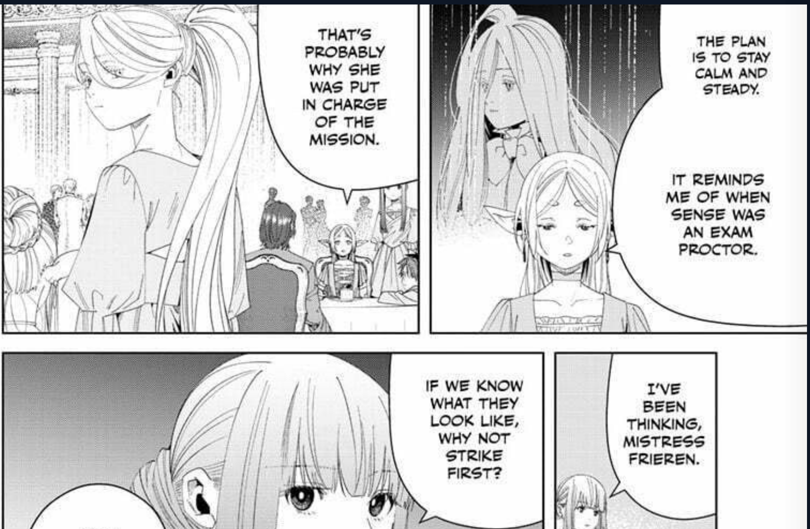
Translation: Andria McKnight Lettering: Annaliese "Ace" Christman

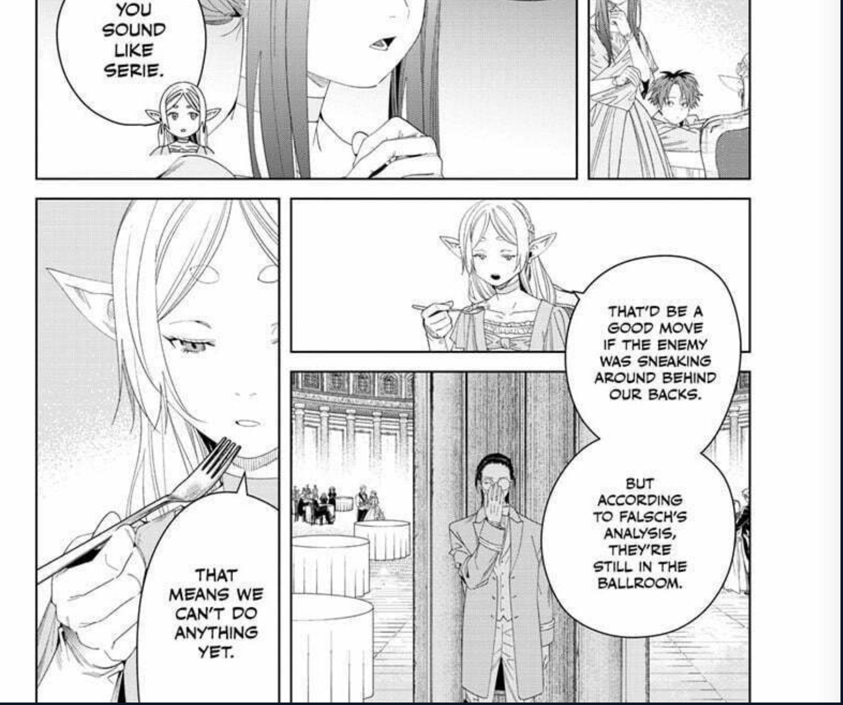
THANK YOU.
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME CAKE?
YES.

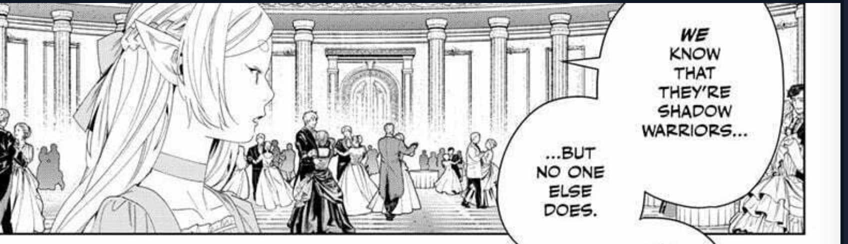

THIS CAKE'S DELICIOUS.
IS IT?

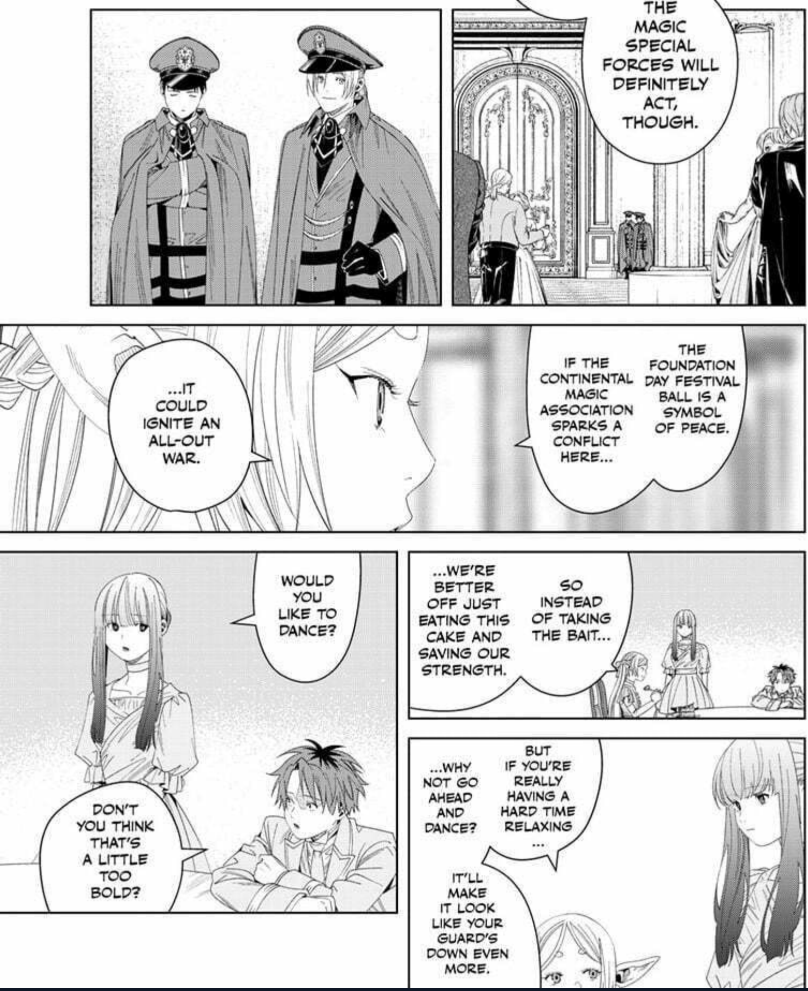

WHY DON'T YOU EAT SOMETHING, FERN?
SEIN CAN TASTE IT FOR POISON FIRST, SO DON'T WORRY.
I'D USE A DETECTION SPELL.
MISTRESS FRIEREN...
THIS IS ALL VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I WAS EXPECTING.
MAN, HERE I WAS MENTALLY PREPARED TO BE THROWN INTO A DEATH TRAP!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, STARK?
THIS *IS* A DEATH TRAP.
WELL, I'M SAYING IT DOESN'T ***LOOK*** LIKE ONE!

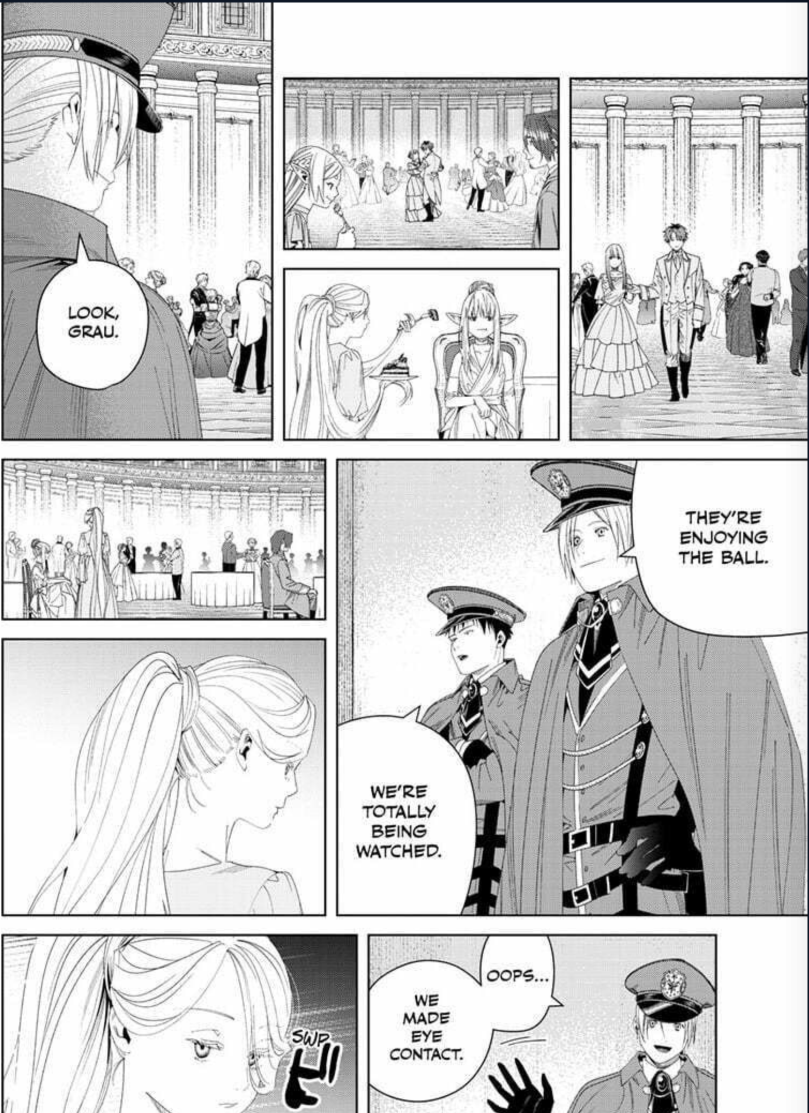

THEY SAID WE SHOULD WAIT FOR THE ENEMY TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE.
I ACTUALLY THINK IT'S A SOLID PLAN.
WE HAVE THE ROSTER. SO WE CAN IDENTIFY THEM.
WE CAN ACT THE MOMENT THEY TRY ANYTHING.
AND BEING ON THE DEFENSIVE GIVES US ACCESS TO INTEL WE MIGHT'VE MISSED.

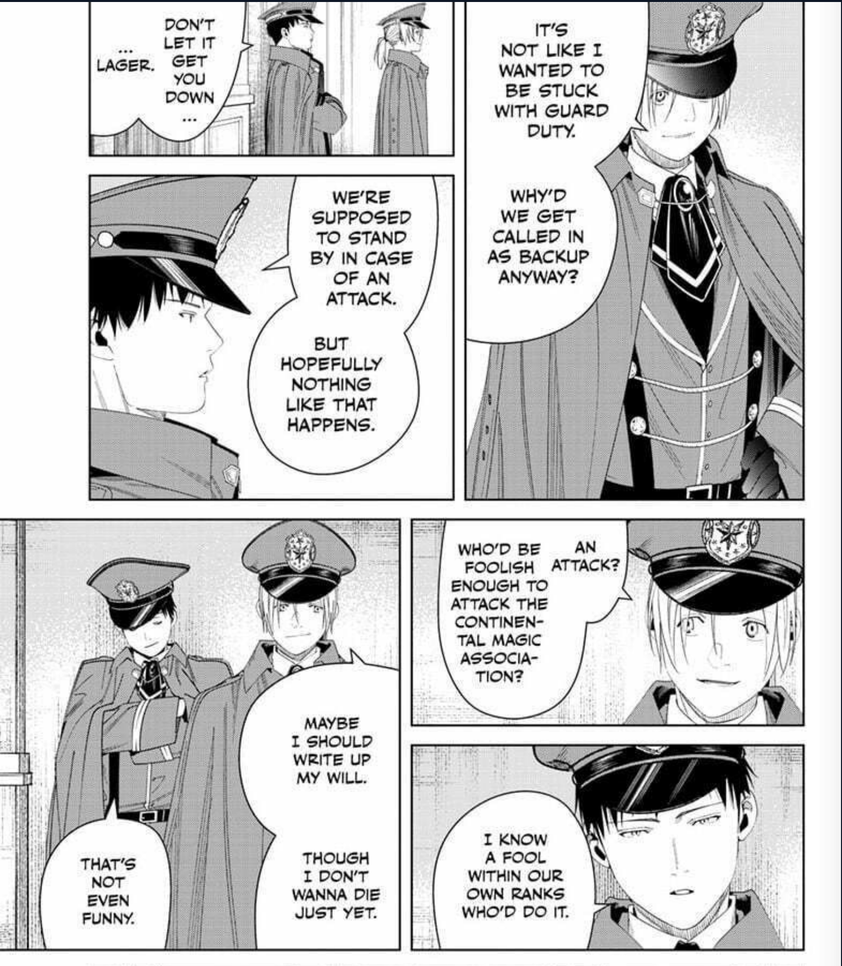

THE PLAN IS TO STAY CALM AND STEADY.
IT REMINDS ME OF WHEN SENSE WAS AN EXAM PROCTOR.
THAT'S PROBABLY WHY SHE WAS PUT IN CHARGE OF THE MISSION.
I'VE BEEN THINKING, MISTRESS FRIEREN.
IF WE KNOW WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE, WHY NOT STRIKE FIRST?

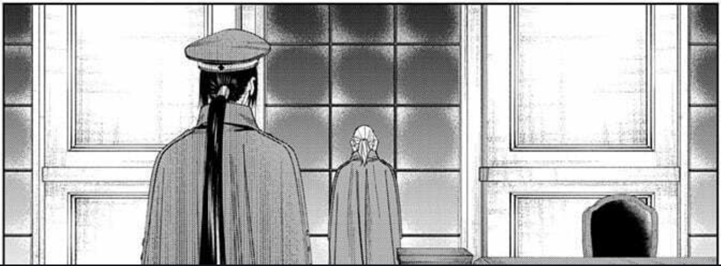

YOU SOUND LIKE SERIE.
THAT'D BE A GOOD MOVE IF THE ENEMY WAS SNEAKING AROUND BEHIND OUR BACKS.
BUT ACCORDING TO FALSCH'S ANALYSIS, THEY'RE STILL IN THE BALLROOM.
THAT MEANS WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING YET.

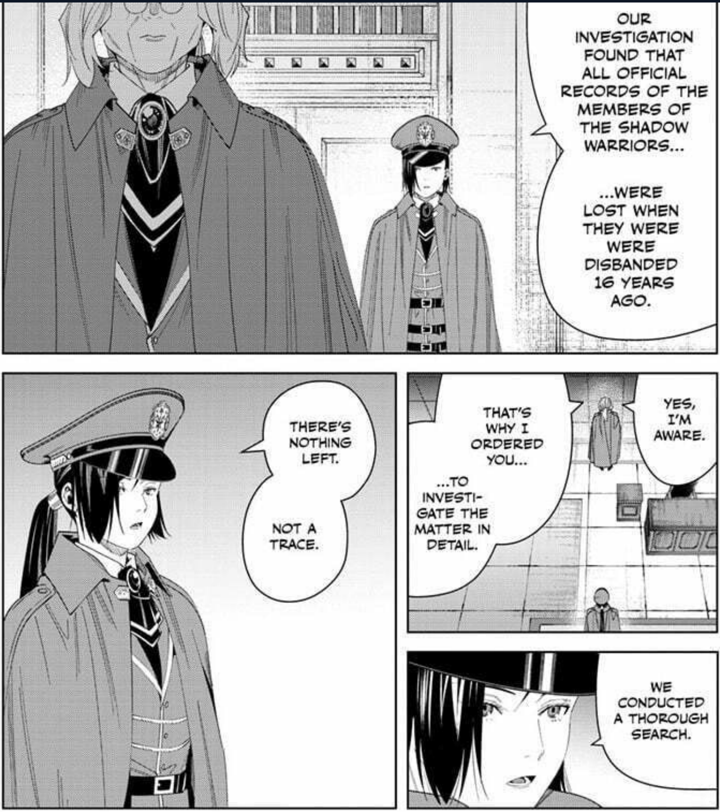

WE KNOW THAT THEY'RE SHADOW WARRIORS...
...BUT NO ONE ELSE DOES.

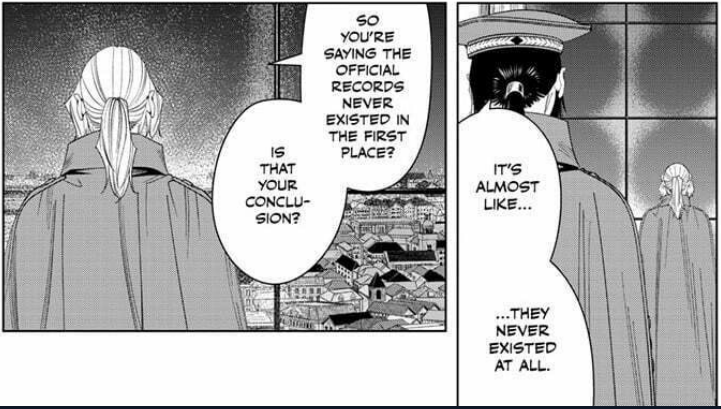

THE MAGIC SPECIAL FORCES WILL DEFINITELY ACT, THOUGH.
THE FOUNDATION DAY FESTIVAL BALL IS A SYMBOL OF PEACE.
IF THE CONTINENTAL MAGIC ASSOCIATION SPARKS A CONFLICT HERE...
...IT COULD IGNITE AN ALL-OUT WAR.
SO INSTEAD OF TAKING THE BAIT...
...WE'RE BETTER OFF JUST EATING THIS CAKE AND SAVING OUR STRENGTH.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO DANCE?
DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S A LITTLE TOO BOLD?
BUT IF YOU'RE REALLY HAVING A HARD TIME RELAXING ...
...WHY NOT GO AHEAD AND DANCE?
IT'LL MAKE IT LOOK LIKE YOUR GUARD'S DOWN EVEN MORE.

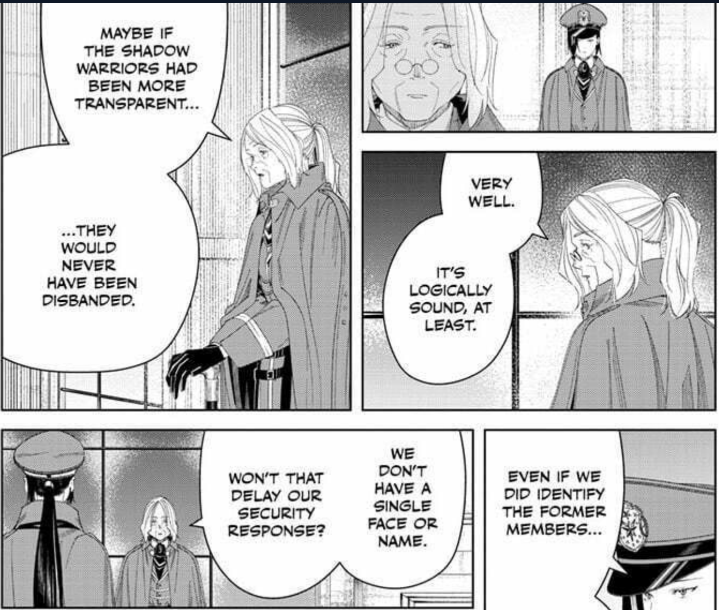

LOOK, GRAU.
THEY'RE ENJOYING THE BALL.
WE'RE TOTALLY BEING WATCHED.
OOPS...
WE MADE EYE CONTACT.
SWP

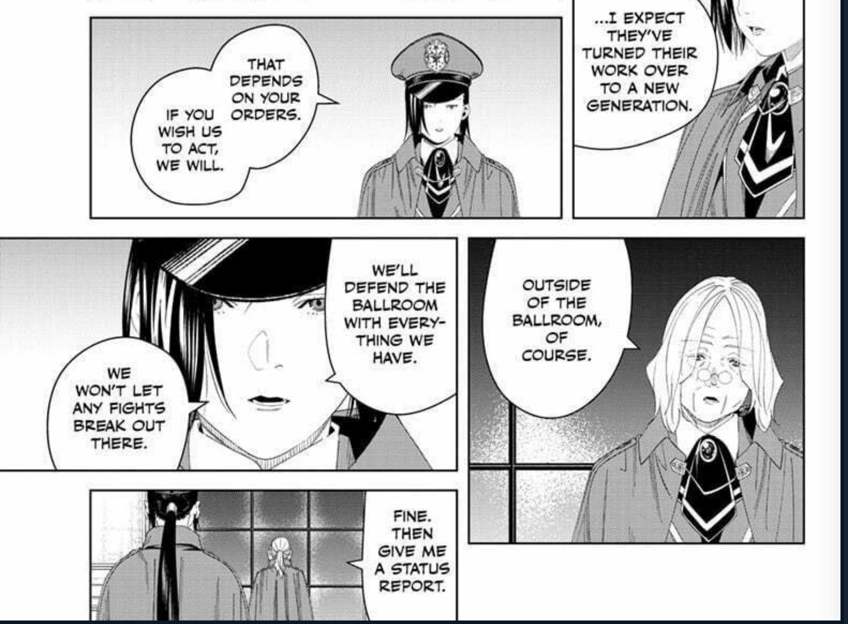

IT'S NOT LIKE I WANTED TO BE STUCK WITH GUARD DUTY.
WHY'D WE GET CALLED IN AS BACKUP ANYWAY?
DON'T LET IT GET YOU DOWN ...
... LAGER.
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO STAND BY IN CASE OF AN ATTACK.
BUT HOPEFULLY NOTHING LIKE THAT HAPPENS.
AN ATTACK?
WHO'D BE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO ATTACK THE CONTINENTAL MAGIC ASSOCIATION?
I KNOW A FOOL WITHIN OUR OWN RANKS WHO'D DO IT.
MAYBE I SHOULD WRITE UP MY WILL.
THOUGH I DON'T WANNA DIE JUST YET.
THAT'S NOT EVEN FUNNY.

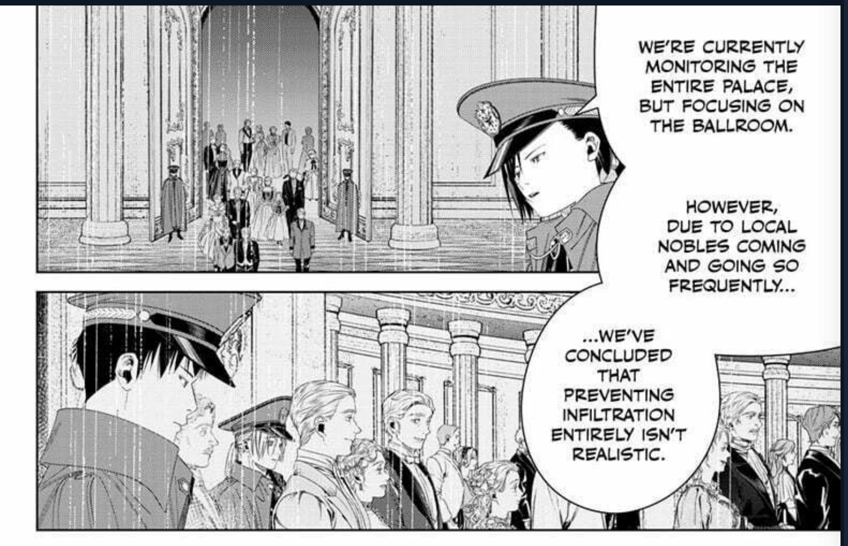


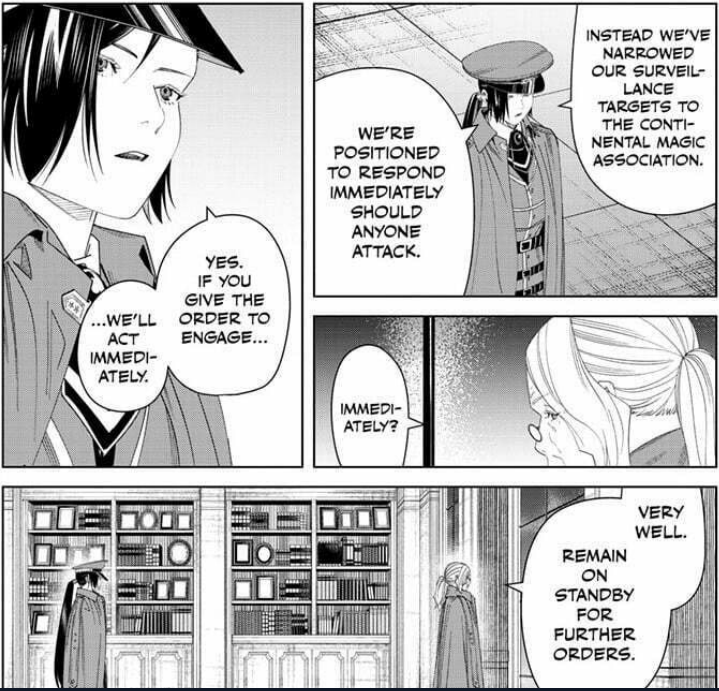

OUR INVESTIGATION FOUND THAT ALL OFFICIAL RECORDS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SHADOW WARRIORS...
...WERE LOST WHEN THEY WERE WERE DISBANDED 16 YEARS AGO.
YES, I'M AWARE.
THAT'S WHY I ORDERED YOU...
...TO INVESTIGATE THE MATTER IN DETAIL.
WE CONDUCTED A THOROUGH SEARCH.
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT.
NOT A TRACE.

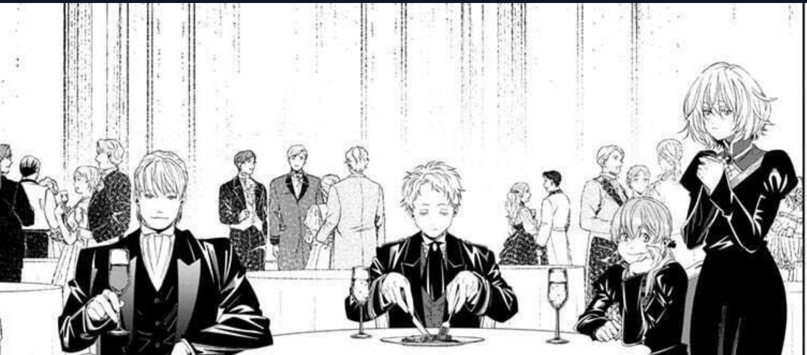

IT'S ALMOST LIKE...
...THEY NEVER EXISTED AT ALL.
SO YOU'RE SAYING THE OFFICIAL RECORDS NEVER EXISTED IN THE FIRST PLACE?
IS THAT YOUR CONCLUSION?

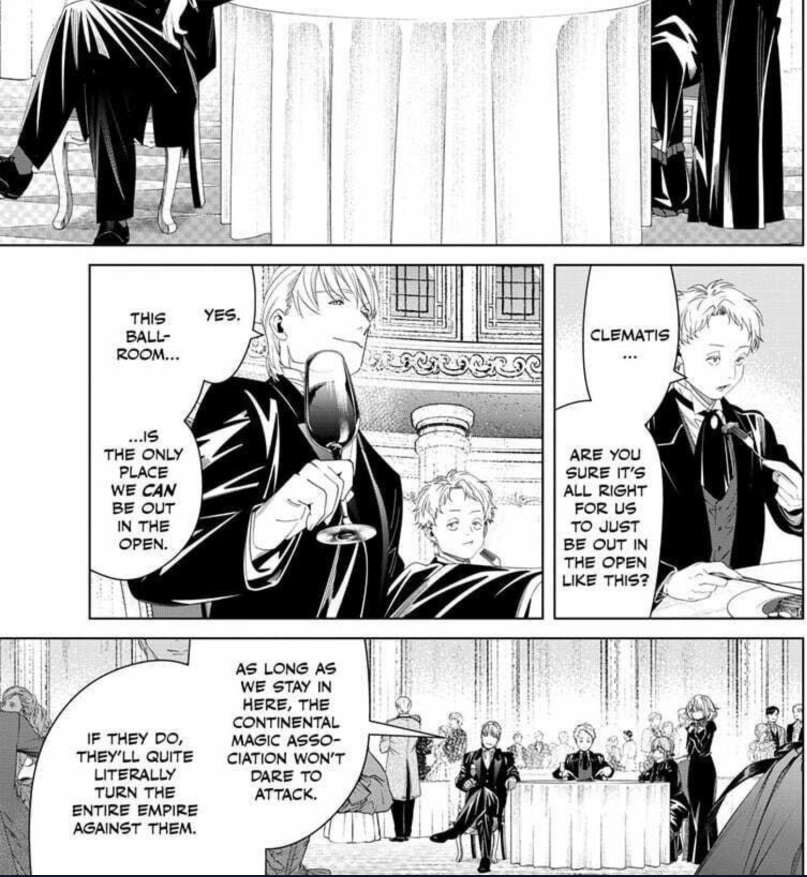

VERY WELL.
IT'S LOGICALLY SOUND, AT LEAST.
MAYBE IF THE SHADOW WARRIORS HAD BEEN MORE TRANSPARENT...
...THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN DISBANDED.
EVEN IF WE DID IDENTIFY THE FORMER MEMBERS...
WE DON'T HAVE A SINGLE FACE OR NAME.
WON'T THAT DELAY OUR SECURITY RESPONSE?

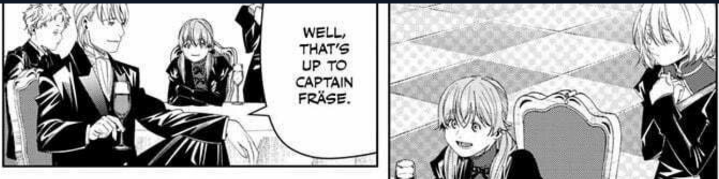

...I EXPECT THEY'VE TURNED THEIR WORK OVER TO A NEW GENERATION.
THAT DEPENDS ON YOUR ORDERS.
IF YOU WISH US TO ACT, WE WILL.
OUTSIDE OF THE BALLROOM, OF COURSE.
WE'LL DEFEND THE BALLROOM WITH EVERYTHING WE HAVE.
WE WON'T LET ANY FIGHTS BREAK OUT THERE.
FINE. THEN GIVE ME A STATUS REPORT.

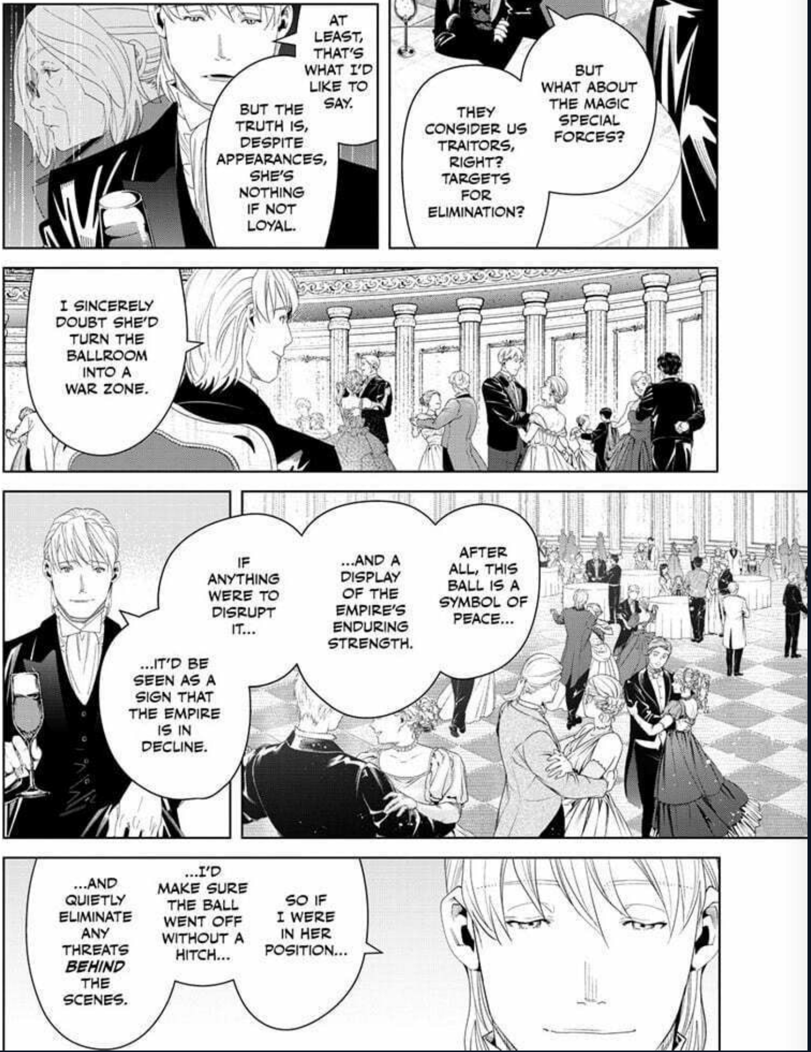

WE'RE CURRENTLY MONITORING THE ENTIRE PALACE, BUT FOCUSING ON THE BALLROOM.
HOWEVER, DUE TO LOCAL NOBLES COMING AND GOING SO FREQUENTLY...
...WE'VE CONCLUDED THAT PREVENTING INFILTRATION ENTIRELY ISN'T REALISTIC.

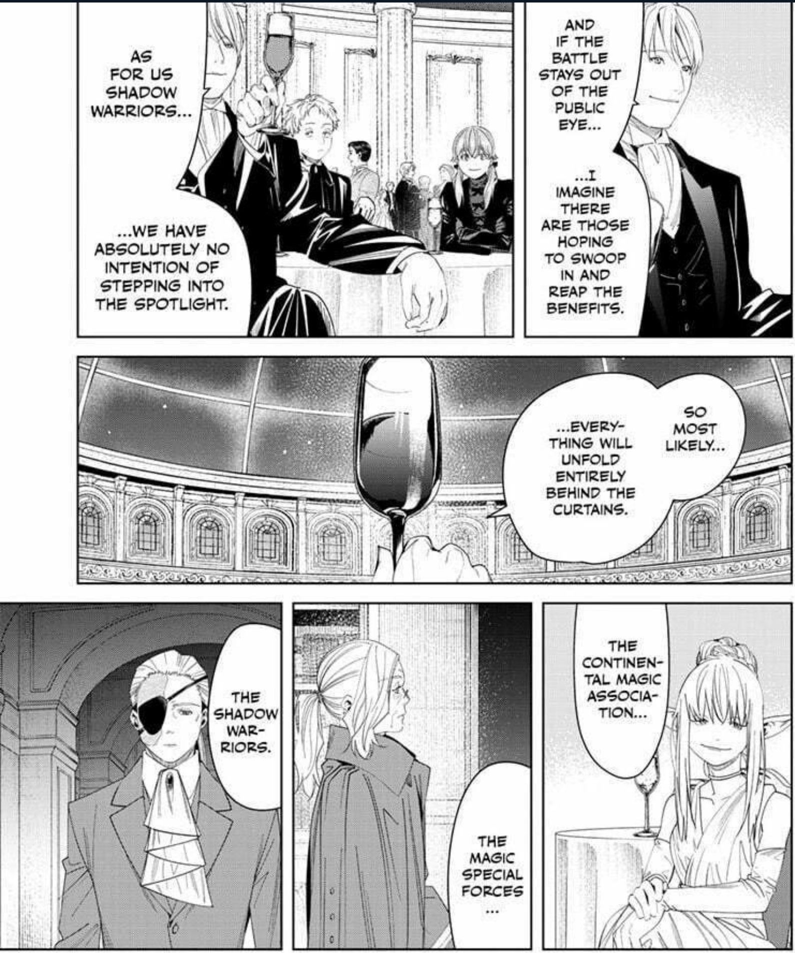

INSTEAD WE'VE NARROWED OUR SURVEILLANCE TARGETS TO THE CONTINENTAL MAGIC ASSOCIATION.
WE'RE POSITIONED TO RESPOND IMMEDIATELY SHOULD ANYONE ATTACK.
YES. IF YOU GIVE THE ORDER TO ENGAGE...
...WE'LL ACT IMMEDIATELY.
IMMEDIATELY?
VERY WELL.
REMAIN ON STANDBY FOR FURTHER ORDERS.

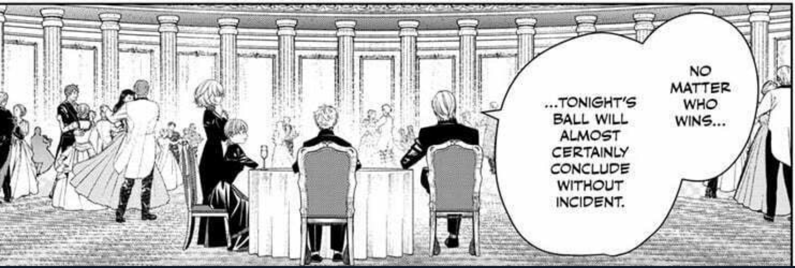


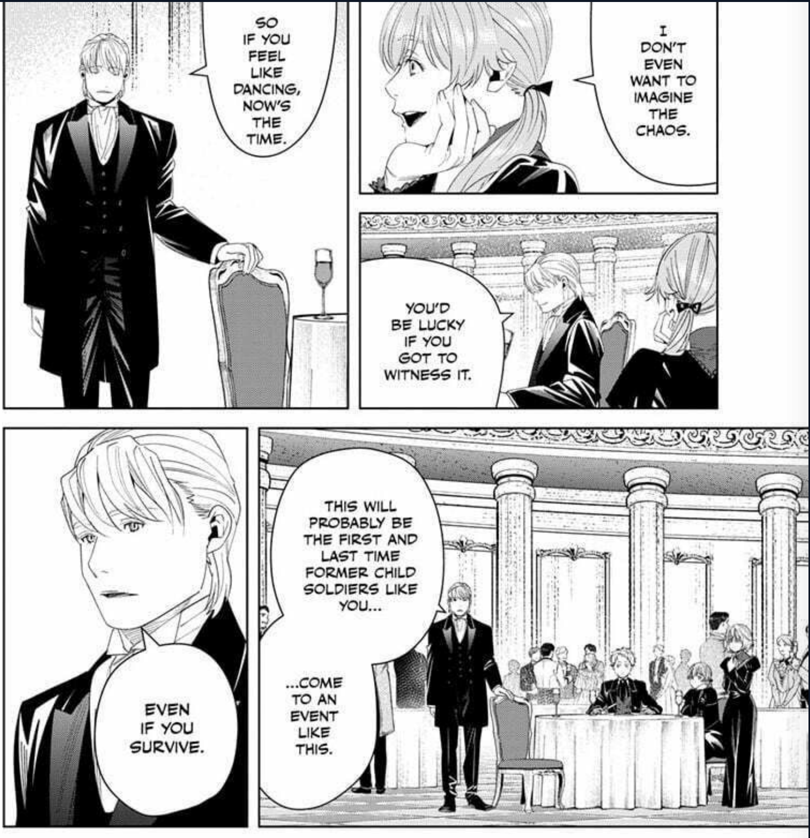

CLEMATIS...
ARE YOU SURE IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR US TO JUST BE OUT IN THE OPEN LIKE THIS?
YES.
THIS BALLROOM...
...IS THE ONLY PLACE WE *CAN* BE OUT IN THE OPEN.
AS LONG AS WE STAY IN HERE, THE CONTINENTAL MAGIC ASSOCIATION WON'T DARE TO ATTACK.
IF THEY DO, THEY'LL QUITE LITERALLY TURN THE ENTIRE EMPIRE AGAINST THEM.

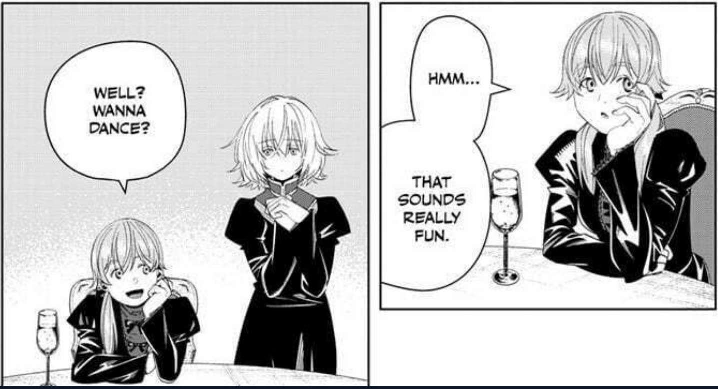

WELL, THAT'S UP TO CAPTAIN FRÄSE.

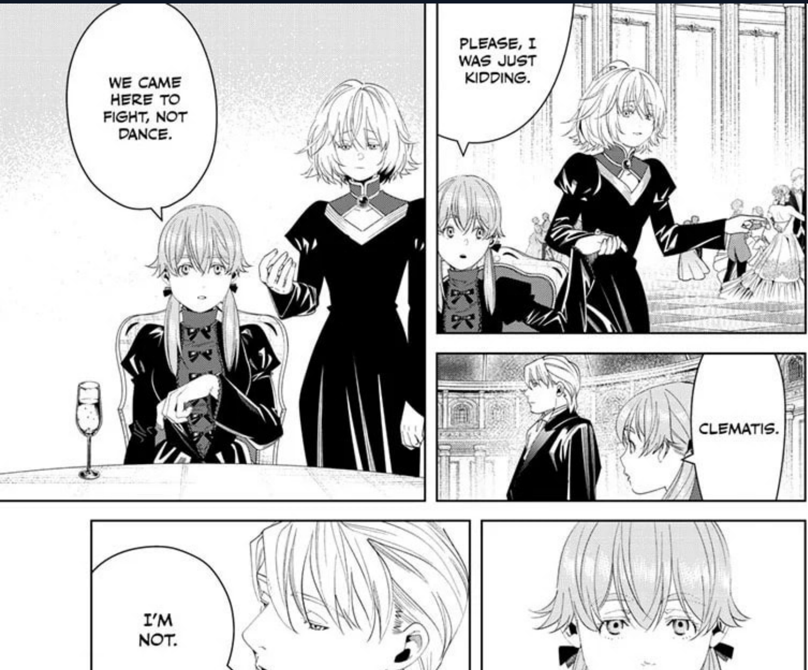

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE MAGIC SPECIAL FORCES?
THEY CONSIDER US TRAITORS, RIGHT? TARGETS FOR ELIMINATION?
AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT I'D LIKE TO SAY.
BUT THE TRUTH IS, DESPITE APPEARANCES, SHE'S NOTHING IF NOT LOYAL.
I SINCERELY DOUBT SHE'D TURN THE BALLROOM INTO A WAR ZONE.
AFTER ALL, THIS BALL IS A SYMBOL OF PEACE...
...AND A DISPLAY OF THE EMPIRE'S ENDURING STRENGTH.
IF ANYTHING WERE TO DISRUPT IT...
...IT'D BE SEEN AS A SIGN THAT THE EMPIRE IS IN DECLINE.
SO IF I WERE IN HER POSITION...
...I'D MAKE SURE THE BALL WENT OFF WITHOUT A HITCH...
...AND QUIETLY ELIMINATE ANY THREATS *BEHIND* THE SCENES.

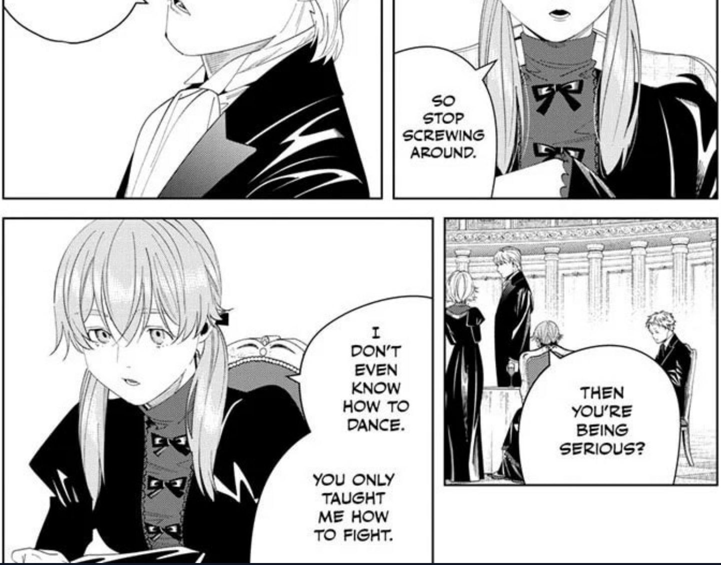

AS FOR US SHADOW WARRIORS...
...WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO INTENTION OF STEPPING INTO THE SPOTLIGHT.
AND IF THE BATTLE STAYS OUT OF THE PUBLIC EYE...
...I IMAGINE THERE ARE THOSE HOPING TO SWOOP IN AND REAP THE BENEFITS.
SO MOST LIKELY...
...EVERYTHING WILL UNFOLD ENTIRELY BEHIND THE CURTAINS.
THE SHADOW WARRIORS.
THE MAGIC SPECIAL FORCES...
THE CONTINENTAL MAGIC ASSOCIATION...

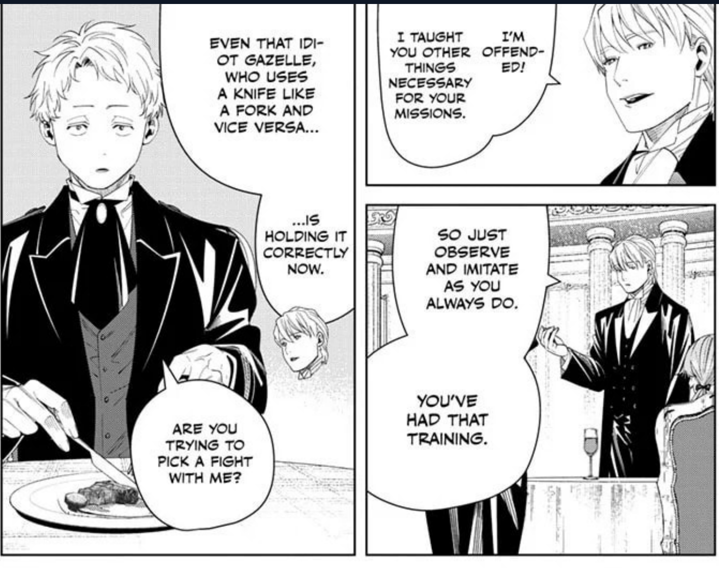

NO MATTER WHO WINS...
...TONIGHT'S BALL WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY CONCLUDE WITHOUT INCIDENT.

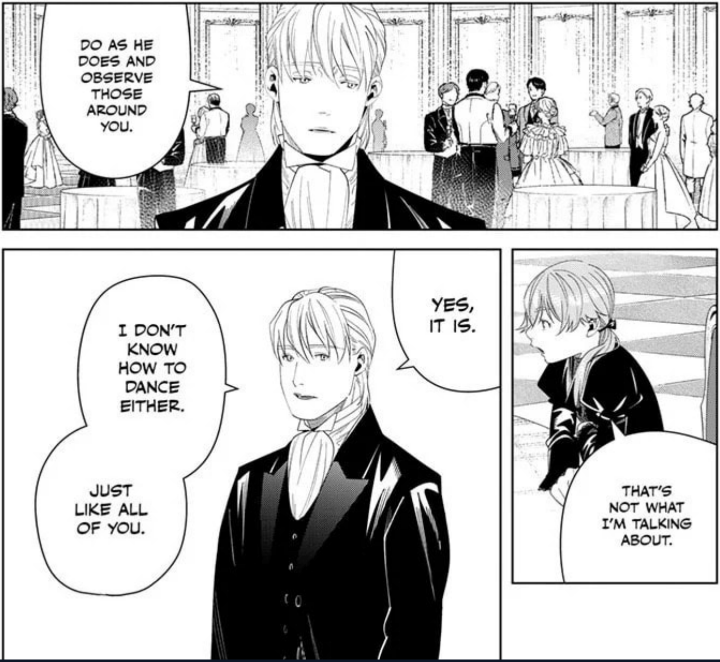

SO IF YOU FEEL LIKE DANCING, NOW'S THE TIME.
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO IMAGINE THE CHAOS.
YOU'D BE LUCKY IF YOU GOT TO WITNESS IT.
EVEN IF YOU SURVIVE.
THIS WILL PROBABLY BE THE FIRST AND LAST TIME FORMER CHILD SOLDIERS LIKE YOU...
...COME TO AN EVENT LIKE THIS.

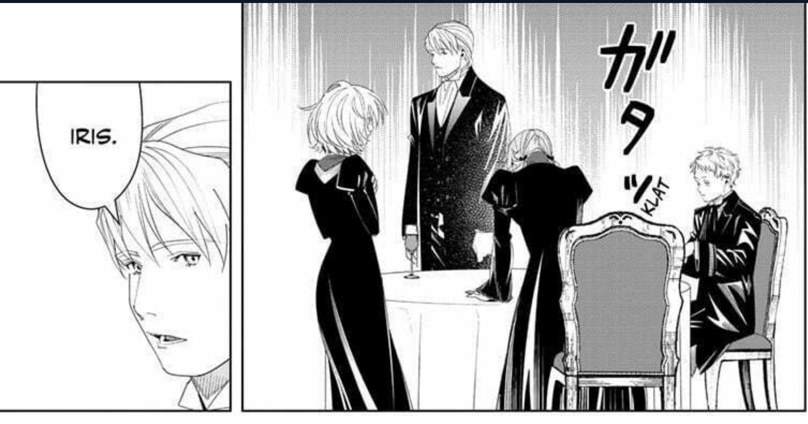

WELL? WANNA DANCE?
HMM...
THAT SOUNDS REALLY FUN.

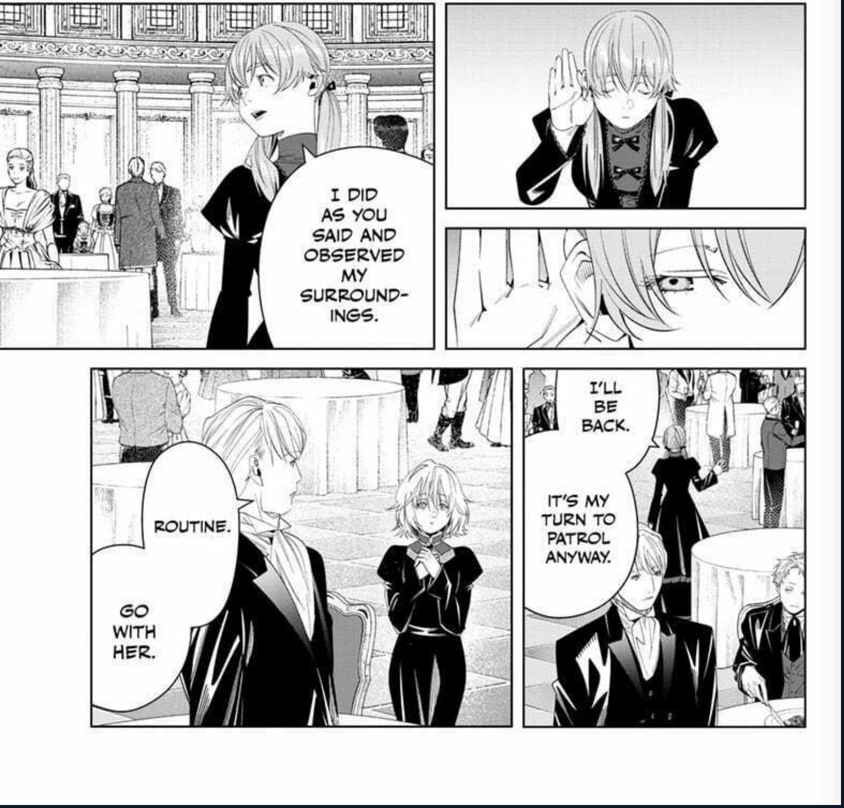

WE CAME HERE TO FIGHT, NOT DANCE.
PLEASE, I WAS JUST KIDDING.
CLEMATIS.
I'M NOT.

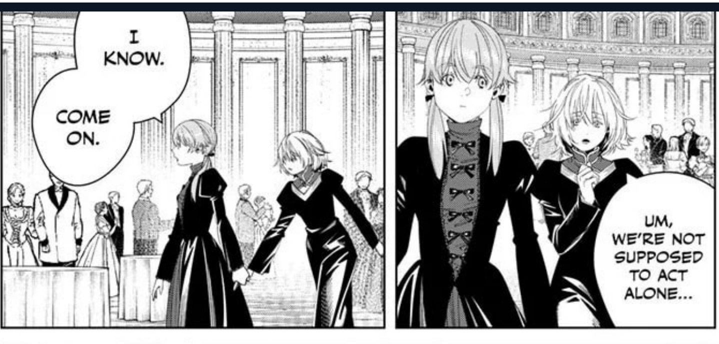

SO STOP SCREWING AROUND.
THEN YOU'RE BEING SERIOUS?
I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO DANCE.
YOU ONLY TAUGHT ME HOW TO FIGHT.

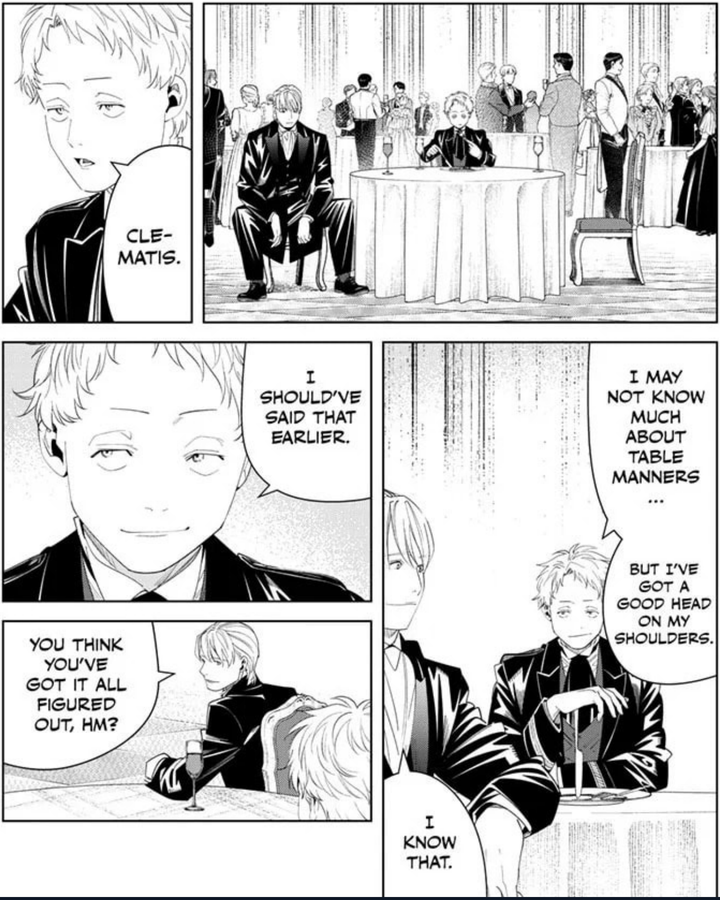

I'M OFFENDED!
I TAUGHT YOU OTHER THINGS NECESSARY FOR YOUR MISSIONS.
SO JUST OBSERVE AND IMITATE AS YOU ALWAYS DO.
YOU'VE HAD THAT TRAINING.
EVEN THAT IDIOT GAZELLE, WHO USES A KNIFE LIKE A FORK AND VICE VERSA...
...IS HOLDING IT CORRECTLY NOW.
ARE YOU TRYING TO PICK A FIGHT WITH ME?

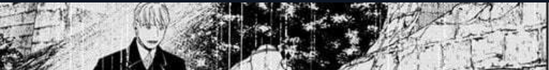

DO AS HE DOES AND OBSERVE THOSE AROUND YOU.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.
YES, IT IS.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DANCE EITHER.
JUST LIKE ALL OF YOU.

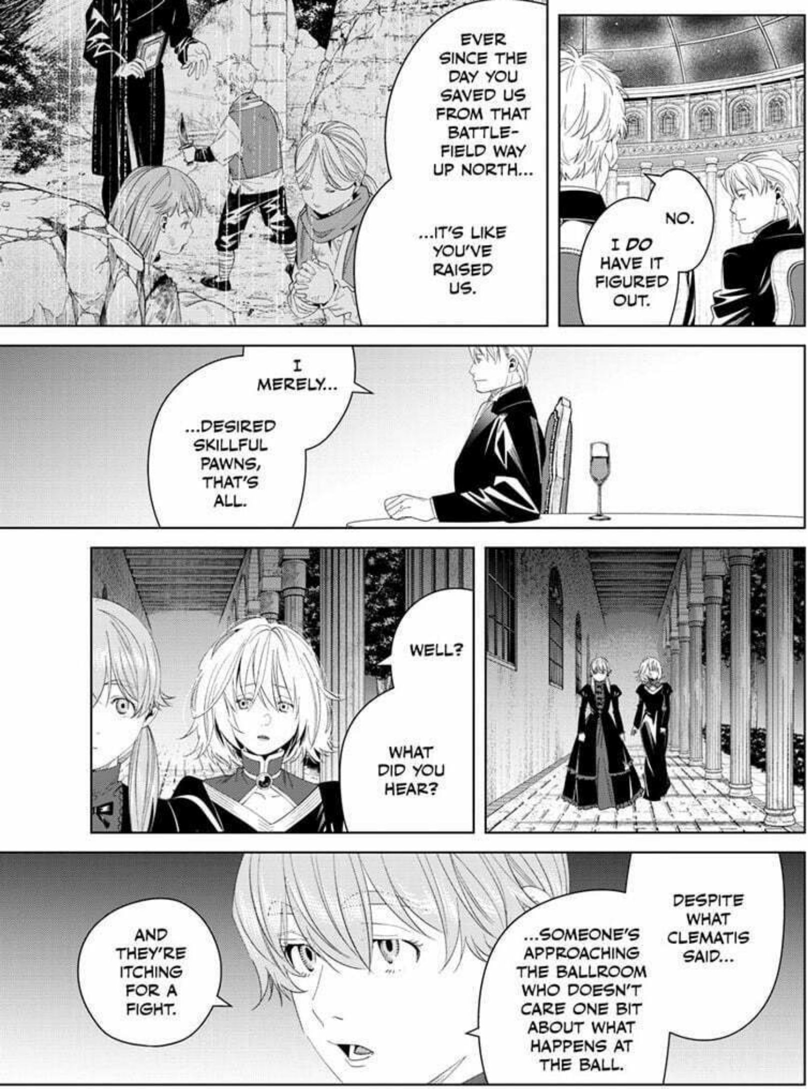

ガタッ
KLAT
IRIS.

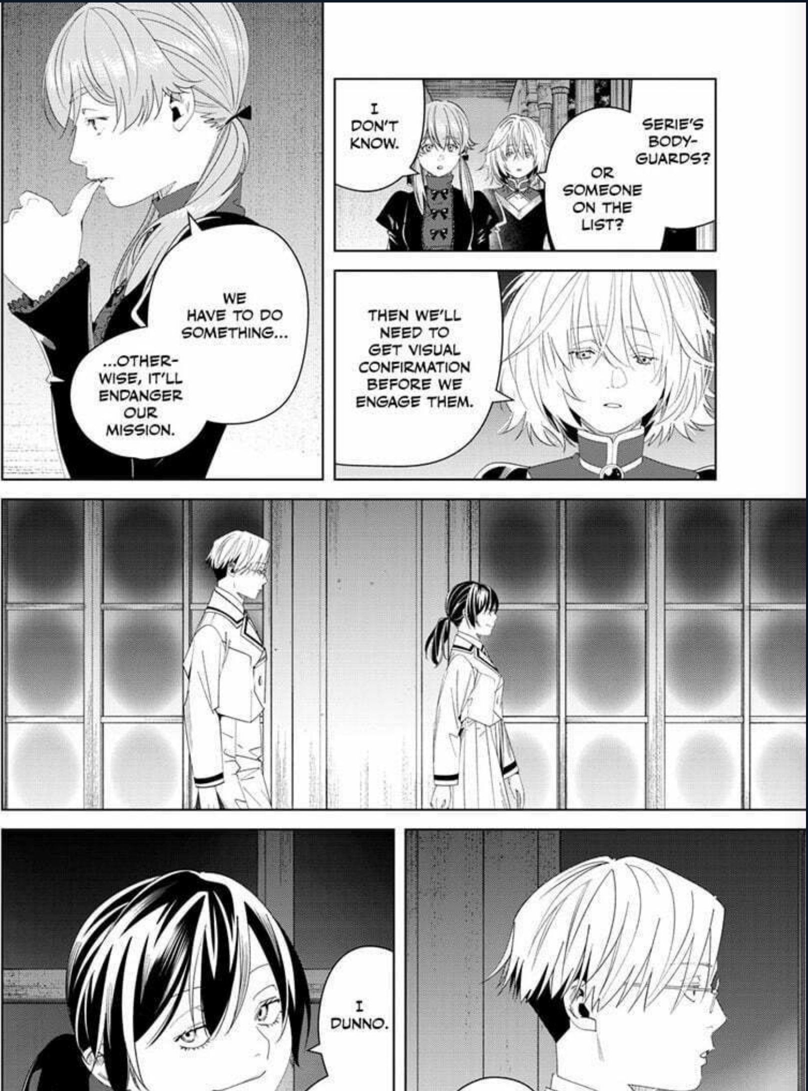

I DID AS YOU SAID AND OBSERVED MY SURROUNDINGS.
I'LL BE BACK.
IT'S MY TURN TO PATROL ANYWAY.
ROUTINE.
GO WITH HER.

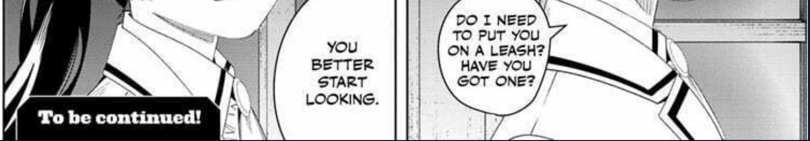

UM, WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO ACT ALONE...
I KNOW.
COME ON.


CLE-MATIS.
I SHOULD'VE SAID THAT EARLIER.
YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT IT ALL FIGURED OUT, HM?
I MAY NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT TABLE MANNERS...
BUT I'VE GOT A GOOD HEAD ON MY SHOULDERS.
I KNOW THAT.




EVER SINCE THE DAY YOU SAVED US FROM THAT BATTLEFIELD WAY UP NORTH...
...IT'S LIKE YOU'VE RAISED US.
NO.
I *DO* HAVE IT FIGURED OUT.
I MERELY...
...DESIRED SKILLFUL PAWNS, THAT'S ALL.
WELL?
WHAT DID YOU HEAR?
DESPITE WHAT CLEMATIS SAID...
...SOMEONE'S APPROACHING THE BALLROOM WHO DOESN'T CARE ONE BIT ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS AT THE BALL.
AND THEY'RE ITCHING FOR A FIGHT.


SERIE'S BODY-GUARDS?
OR SOMEONE ON THE LIST?
I DON'T KNOW.
THEN WE'LL NEED TO GET VISUAL CONFIRMATION BEFORE WE ENGAGE THEM.
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING...
...OTHERWISE, IT'LL ENDANGER OUR MISSION.
I DUNNO.


DO I NEED TO PUT YOU ON A LEASH? HAVE YOU GOT ONE?
YOU BETTER START LOOKING.
To be continued!

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